

ANNUAL REPORT

by
Officers and Leaders

"A YEAR OF PROGRESS AND A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE"

January 16, 1958

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OFFICERS 1956-57

President - - - Stanley B. Winters, 26 Shanley Avenue
 Vice-President - Olga M. Russell, 62 Shanley Avenue
 Vice-President - Stanley J. Hallett, 838 South 14 Street
 Corresponding Secretary - Dr. Alfred E. Pina, 836 South 12 Street
 Recorder - - - Grace Golat, 299 Clinton Avenue
 Treasurer - - - Dr. Abraham Kurzrock, 60 Treacy Avenue
 (Term expires February 1, 1958)

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

In reviewing an inspiring and exhilarating year of activity by the Clinton Hill Neighborhood Council, it is not easy to select the most essential strands to weave into an annual report. It was a year of growth and progress. Many new members joined our ranks, while everyone redoubled his efforts and gave unstintingly of that most precious commodity - time. For us all an annual report is a chance to take stock of where we have been and where we are going. It is an opportunity to analyze our community and its life. We are still a neighborhood in transition, and there are current some trends which demand our serious attention. They promise to undo much good work, if allowed to develop unhindered. They call into question our implicit and explicit aim of maintaining a heterogeneous community where people from every walk of life and every background can live peaceably and happily together.

First let us give attention to Housing and Urban Renewal. The housing situation is key, since decent homes and apartments at reasonable cost are essential to neighborhood stability. On the other hand, high rentals, peeling paint, overcrowded apartments, and poor sanitary facilities promote not a stake in one's community but an I-don't-care attitude. They breed not community spirit and goodwill but transiency and defeatism. It is impossible to defend and improve an area under such handicaps.

That is why the proposal, made in November, 1956, by the Newark Commission on Neighborhood Conservation and Rehabilitation (NMCNR), that a 14-block area in Clinton Hill be designated as Urban Renewal, met with such enthusiasm. The proposed project that private efforts would be reinforced by broad public resources. The details of the project are well known to us now, having been reported fully in the local press and in our own publications.

Around the project several splendid activities were developed. One was a series of block meetings on Scynour Avenue and Hedden Terrace with city officials to present the views of the residents in the renewal area. Out of these meetings evolved the council's Liaison and Planning Committee, which has worked closely with Planning Officer Robert C. Hoover and his associates while the plan was being drawn up.

One cannot over praise the cooperation of these officials.

Another activity was the bus trip to Philadelphia on March 23. Led by Mr. Hoover and Jacob W. Feldman of the Council of Social Agencies, two busloads of Clinton Hillers, members of other community councils, and city officials spend a day inspecting Philadelphia's achievements in neighborhood conservation and in recreation. What we saw strengthened our belief in the power for good inherent in local efforts backed by city, state, and Federal assistance. Especially in recreation has Philadelphia done some marvelous things. Our trip received prominent mention in the Newark News, the Newark Star Ledger, and the New Jersey Afro-American. (And, in Time Magazine, October 21, we were mentioned as well.)

Then, at our wonderful second annual South Side High School Conference on May 19, our ideas on planning were further advanced. Mr. Hoover outlined the prerequisites for local, neighborhood planning, and many members volunteered to help with such a plan for Clinton Hill. Unfortunately, a communication to the Central Planning Board following this up has gone unanswered. But the conference provided a common meeting ground for residents of many blocks to discuss mutual problems and experiences.

The Urban Renewal project received a boost last May when the Mayor of Newark, under pressure from our council, sent an order to the Revenue Director to begin negotiations for the purchase of the Orphanage site at 534 Clinton Avenue. This was the tract, 1250 feet long and 150 feet wide, which a supermarket wished to purchase in the summer of 1956. At a hearing before the Zoning Board we presented petitions with 1400 signatures requesting that the supermarket's request for a variance be denied and that the city purchase the site for park and recreational use. The supermarket subsequently withdrew its bid.

After the Mayor's announcement, repeated inquiries from our officers brought the information that site acquisition was imminent, but with no concrete results. As recently as last December 9 a letter from the Mayor stated that the property would be acquired in "approximately 10 days." At this writing the property is still in private hands. Continuing and powerful pressure may be the only guarantee that this vital property be taken over by the city as the heart and core of the Urban Renewal project. Delay can be disastrous, because while details are presumably being ironed out, an entire neighborhood is being menaced by blight and overcrowding.

Very early in 1957 we were assured by the NCNCR that/the "highest priority" to the Clinton Hill project application. However, with the publicity presently being given to missiles and scientific development, we run the risk of seeing Urban Renewal submerged. This would be a personal disaster for the 35,000 residents of Clinton Hill as well as for millions of others throughout the country who live in older areas menaced by deterioration and obsolescence. Dr. Al Finn, council secretary, has suggested that we bring this to the attention of our elected and appointed representatives on every level. Already one letter to the Congressman from the 11th New Jersey district brought an assurance of cooperation, which he followed up in a statement in the press on January 14. Letters from individuals and other interested groups can do much to awaken our representatives.

Discussed later on by others are the possibilities and advantages - nay, even necessities - of middle income and cooperative housing in Clinton Hill. Here we may learn from the program of the Chelsea Community Council in New York which is moving in the same direction.

To conclude the section on housing, I wish to deal with the problem of enforcement. Our council endorsed the recently passed amendments to the city's housing code, designed to eliminate overcrowding and other blight breeders. In addition, there are on the books many ordinances relating to health, fire, and sanitation. Unfortunately, enforcement of these ordinances is lagging far behind the rate at which violations are growing. Illegal rooming houses are still in existence and increasing, despite the successful fight in the Superior Court in 1956 by Olga Russell and the Shanley Avenue Civic Association. To our knowledge, not one illegal rooming house, not even one of the defendants in that case, has been asked to close. There may be a shortage of building inspectors; there may be a bottleneck in the office of the Chief Building Inspector. Whatever the reason, despite repeated assurances of cooperation by the city administration, this development continues to gnaw at the residential character and quality of Clinton Hill. Nor will other areas be immune. I endorse the statement by Henry Connor, a member of the NCNCR, on October 16, 1957, asking Housing Court magistrates to deal maximum penalties to property owners who maintain violations of the health, welfare, and decent living conditions prescribed by law. The failure of the city to act here strikes a serious blow at community morale.

A second area of council activity was recreation. The amazing success of the Halloween Parade was described by Timothy O'Brien, recreation committee chairman, in the November "Neighborhood News." Another comment will be found later in the report. Suffice to say that the parade sub-committee, headed by the Rev. Curtis B. Geyer, and all others who helped, learned valuable lessons from this first venture. Its continuation in 1958 - and an early start in planning - seem to be generally approved.

The recreation committee also sponsored a conference on "Youth Needs and Adult Leadership" which was held on December 2 at the Blessed Sacrament Church. Several excellent suggestions for more intensive use of existing facilities and creation of new ones were made, and a dozen institutions conducting youth programs in Clinton Hill responded to a detailed questionnaire. These suggestions should be implemented. Because of a growing youth population, there may soon be a shortage of adequate, attractive facilities. Especially in the summer are activities like swimming and day trips badly needed. The question, "Why can't Clinton Hill have a swimming pool like other parts of Newark?" deserves to be asked of every candidate for public office in the May elections.

Third we should mention the work of the Associated Community Councils of Newark, whose very existence may be unsuspected by many members. Already there are ten community councils in Newark belonging to this coordinating, informational-exchange organization. Our bus trip to Philadelphia was partially paid for by the Associated group. When there are neighborhood problems which have city-wide significance

or require coordinated action, we can bring them to the Associated Community Councils. The non-profit, inter-group, and non-partisan nature of the Associated Councils reflects our own principles. As a recently elected member of the Council of Social Agencies, the Associated Councils, and we as members, may be eligible for the assistance and trained personnel of the social agency. In this way the full significance of Red Feather can be brought into each household.

We come next to the fourth item, that of public safety. There has been an increase in the number of house entries, purse snatchings, and holdups in Clinton Hill within the past six months, if one is to believe press accounts and reports from aggrieved residents and shopkeepers. On December 29, 1957 the press carried the story that the owner of a small grocery on Johnson Avenue and West Runyon Street was closing after four thefts, three of them since last summer. On several streets, because of hangouts and poor lighting, persons are wary of walking on the sidewalks. Once there grows a feeling of insecurity of life and property, it is not easy to dispel. Clinton Hill has always been a pleasant place in which to live, but unless crimes and annoyances decline its reputation can change.

A conference between eight council members and the Police Director on November 22 brought assurances of cooperation. Several complaints were promptly handled; however, incidents continue to occur.

The problem of truck parking overnight on residential streets is being handled through the block branches of the council. Persistence in calling this problem to the attention of the police by George Davis, chairman of the Seymour Avenue branch, has been emulated by block leaders on Peshine Avenue. Meanwhile, the Bergen Street branch, Mildred Holms chairman, is in touch with the Traffic Engineer over an ordinance banning overnight truck parking anywhere in the city. The matter is currently being studied. Also in connection with parking one notes with relief the appearance of signs regulating metered parking on Clinton Avenue. How slowly the mills grind! In 1956 the proposed meters were announced. In the summer of 1957 they were erected. Three months later white lines were painted. Now, seven months later, the signs are finally up. One wonders how much trade has been lost by local merchants because of the parking problem on Clinton Avenue. But now we have them; let them be enforced, and let the city derive its much needed revenue from them.

To close the section of public safety, we cite the perseverance of the South 17 Street branch, Mrs. Pauline von Busch chairman, in bringing to an apparent end the nuisance of bee-bee shots and other annoyances by neighboring youngsters. The problem of a raucous gathering of youths, many from other towns, near the Madison Avenue School last summer was effectively handled by the authorities. There may, however, be a place in the program of the schools in Clinton Hill to promote better understanding among youngsters from widely differing backgrounds.

Fifth comes education. Overcrowding in housing produces overcrowding in classrooms, as one member discusses further on. An unsatisfactory school situation can unsettle a family as quickly as anything else. Everyone wants a good education for his child. Thirty-five and forty pupils in a class, however, make it impossible for any teacher to do justice to the individual child. Also, antiquated plant (fourth floor auditoriums, no cafeterias) is depriving both pupils and teachers of the benefits of modern educational materials and school design. School yards tiny or ill equipped are rarely rallying points for local youths. The most devoted efforts of recreation workers will fail to entice youngsters into a narrow, inhospitable school recreational center.

The recent recreational conference showed that cooperation between school personnel and community can bring forth constructive suggestions. Some need prompt action now, not five years from now, like the "tot lot" at Avon Avenue School, to name one. Children speaking Spanish or from newly arrived families are daily entering Clinton Hill's schools. A warm, understanding greeting from school and community can do much to ease worries and promote the community spirit we all desire. Educational problems in their many aspects deserve unremitting attention from our council.

Health and sanitation is sixth. The H. and S. committee succeeded in having the city place a dozen litter baskets at strategic corners in Clinton Hill. But heavy parking on the streets prevents the sweepers from reaching the curb, where rubbish accumulates giving rise to unpleasant odors and unhealthy conditions. A suggestion by the H. and S. committee to the Mayor that experimental one-side-of-the-street parking begin on several streets in the neighborhood has been forwarded by him to the Sanitation Division. We should express a continued interest in this until the program is actuated.

Noise nuisances from honking taxis and morning picker-ups also need attention. In the summertime, repeated and overlylong parties and playing of musical instruments can also be detrimental to a neighborhood. These things violate Sections 19.1 and 19.2 of the City Code and should be alleviated.

Outstanding examples of what self-help can do are the two cleanup drives last spring and fall conducted by the Seymour Avenue and the Freshing Avenue branches. Support by local businessmen added extra incentive to residents to fix sagging steps, repair broken glass, paint exteriors, and clean cellars. Now that we have members experienced in such campaigns, the H. and S. committee should begin to plan similar drives on other blocks, or even on the same ones again. Lastly, from the Bergen Street branch has come the suggestion for a block bank maintained by and for council members and their families. This idea, if realizable, can bring out with especial richness the meaning of brotherhood.

Next is council membership and organization. The year 1957 saw our membership double and the number of institutions joining with us increase. We are, nevertheless, only beginning to build the kind

of support we need to be truly effective. In such growth the formation of new block branches is indispensable. Through the branches neighbors meet to discuss and solve mutual problems of community betterment. They, through elected leaders and delegates to the Executive Board, they bring the viewpoints so vital to the formulation of a sound overall council policy. At least 50% of our members have joined through the branches. To reach members where no branches now exist area-wide meetings should be arranged. These members can become the nuclei, working with the Block Organizing committee, to establish the council where it does not now reach. People from adjacent blocks should be invited to branch meetings to see how they operate. Some blocks have already begun to do this.

The influx of new talents and the diversity of the council's interests and activities led, after preliminary circulation of a draft, to the adoption of our new constitution on November 21, 1957. Additional vice-presidencies were created and provisions made for decentralization of responsibilities. But this constitution, like any other, will need revision as we go along. Already several omissions have been noted, which deserve attention by the Executive Board by virtue of its power of amendment. To name a few: the calling of special meetings, simplification of elections, setting of a quorum, the filling of vacancies, and the authorization of disbursements.

The new constitution sets up committees whose effective functioning will do much to implement our aims and purposes. More members will thus be involved in overall council activities, and block leaders and council officers will thereby be relieved of frequently overlapping responsibilities. Committees can also be the media for educating Clinton Hillers in the various aspects of zoning, housing, and urban renewal, just as members of the Liaison Planning Committee in the past year have received a liberal education in redesigning a neighborhood.

The committees and some suggestions as to their scope and activities are as follows:

1. Program: schedule general council meetings and affairs; plan South Side Conference; help block branches plan their programs; secure speakers, films, and materials; work with Halloween sub-committee.
2. Public Affairs: study proposed or pending legislation on a city, state, and Federal level where it affects Clinton Hill; slate forums and non-partisan questionnaires for electoral candidates; have a representative at City Council meetings; maintain liaison with Associated Community Councils; work with Clinton Hill Advisory Board set up under new constitution to suggest strategy for community improvement; contact with U.N. Day Committee and other city-wide groups holding observances in harmony with our own aims.
3. Health and Sanitation: Handle complaints forwarded to it by block branches; press for one-side-of-the-street parking to help street sweeping; investigate noise nuisances; survey need for expanded Baby-Keep-Well stations and day nurseries in Clinton Hill; consider proposal for council blood bank.

4. Communications: Recruit staff for "Neighborhood News," plan regular issuance, perhaps in printed form; advise with and help prepare block newsletters and leaflets; issue press releases; set up mailing sub-committee; develop new kinds of council literature.

5. Planning and Liaison: Keep contact with City Planning Division and NCRCR on progress of Urban Renewal application; press for acquisition of Orphanage site; develop with block branches land use surveys with local college and institutional help; follow up on possibility of master plan for Clinton Hill; develop approach to proposed Route 22 connecting highway along Belmont Avenue axis; hold informational meetings of members of council on topics related to city planning, community conservation and rehabilitation.

6. Budget and Finance: Draw up annual council budget; set up Membership sub-committee to collect dues, mail notices of renewal; raise funds for special projects such as council headquarters in a store front; keep up-to-date file of members; visit and enlist institutional leadership not yet allied to council; prepare quarterly financial statements and annual financial report, with council treasurer.

7. Education: Strengthen PTA-council relations; examine feasibility of CHCC survey of school needs; have a representative at all Board of Education meetings; study integration patterns; welcome new school officials appointed to local posts; cooperate and exchange information with other non-partisan civic groups interested in better schools.

8. Welfare and Welcome: Develop welcoming procedure for new families as they move in; prepare pamphlet on rights and responsibilities of new neighbors, giving background of Clinton Hill and of the council, location of institutions and public facilities, shopping and commercial centers; know which resources to call upon in event a family is burnt out or a water main bursts; decide feasibility and desirability of setting up council headquarters, open day and evening, staffed by volunteers, where members and residents could come for legal assistance, to chat, or just to make friends; explore possibility of council-supported non-partisan year-round registration campaign for non-voters; publicize save paper and other drives.

9. Block Organizing: Expand the number of block branches; nurture new or weak branches; develop literature for leaders of new branches; locate interested people on new blocks; explore new contacts through institutional resources.

10. Zoning: Submit to proper authorities reported zoning violations; receive notices of applications for variances, determining which might be detrimental to area; have representatives when needed at Board of Adjustment meetings; educate new homeowners on zoning codes; press for upgrading of poorly zoned areas in conjunction with land use surveys and master plan; push strict enforcement of zoning codes; hold informational meetings on importance of zoning.

11. Housing: Survey and publicize misuses and violations of proper housing facilities, deterioration, overcrowding; sponsor cleanup drives (with H. and S. committee); Study and make recommendations on middle income and cooperative housing for Clinton Hill;

Set up liaison and representation on NCHCR and other groups interested in preserving residential areas; seek amelioration of poor conditions through meetings with property managers and owners and expedite the filing of complaints; mail congratulatory letters to homeowners who paint up and maintain their dwellings in an attractive manner; hold open meetings on housing problems and pending reassessment program; report instances of unethical real estate practices; seek ending of panic inducing fliers, garish "for sale" signs; advise on feasibility of council action to help end racial designations in real estate advertising; study means of opening other areas of city on non-discriminatory basis in rental housing.

12. Recreation: Swimming pool; follow up recommendations of Recreation Conference (December 2, 1957); build inter-group and inter-institutional cooperation and coordination; reactivate Halloween Parade sub-committee; publicize community center program in public schools; liaison with Westside Community Council for park development; further study and possible action on "tot lots" on vacant city owned land.

13. Block Steering: Block leaders meet to exchange ideas on mutual questions; arrange inter-block functions; establish block leadership roundtable aiming for self-evaluation of methods, democratic meeting procedures, perfection of problem solving techniques, effective participation of block residents and branch members; assist in identification of neighborhood trends; support efforts of Block Organizing Committee with speakers, contacts; discuss means of insuring satisfactory block program in harmony with overall council objectives.

As even a cursory glance will disclose, even as the block branches are the backbone and nerve centers of the council, so the committees are the muscles and sinews; and the institutions may be likened to the hands and legs for the priceless moral leadership and material support which they provide.

In closing this first annual report, one realizes that we are looking openly into a many-sided situation, and courage will be necessary, and frankness, too. Above all let us keep pointed toward the goals which drew us together and the spirit which has kept us united. We shall grow if our council remains united, a non-partisan, inter-group, non-profit body open to all residents who subscribe to our aims. This will help guarantee that we use our strength in the most effective manner.

Stanley B. Winters, President
Clinton Hill Neighborhood Council

(P.S. For the ideas in this report I am in large part indebted to many council members with whom I was privileged to discuss the issues contained herein. We are all probably mindful of the invaluable assistance frequently given us by city officials, on their own time, in many, many meetings. One may particularly cite the staff of the Mayor's Commission on Group Relations and members of the Planning Division of the City of Newark.)

"The Year in Review"

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

1. The large number of capable, dedicated, and community-minded persons who have voluntarily assumed positions of leadership in the Clinton Hill Neighborhood Council is for me the most significant fact of the past year's activities. It is significant because it means that these persons believe:

- 1) that our community can be maintained and improved as a desirable place in which to live;
- 2) that the council is proving itself to be a vigorous force for community betterment; and
- 3) that there are pressing community problems which require united action.

I have been privileged to work with many, many persons who were giving time and energy from busy lives. They are doing this because the stakes are high. Overcrowding in housing (resulting in overcrowding in classrooms, parking, etc.), rent gouging, and rooming house profiteering are basic threats to our community. There is an increasingly clear call for leadership. It is thrilling to see that call being answered.

The Rev. Stanley J. Hallett
Vice-President, CHNC

2. One of the most serious problems I think we have in our neighborhood is housing. There are many people living in tiny quarters. People are buying up houses and putting 2 and 3 families on a floor, all using the same bath and kitchen, where there used to be only one. I think the City ought to look into that.

In one house on our block there is an elderly woman on a third floor with only one exit. There was a fire there the other day. If she had been upstairs she would have been burnt to death. The rents these people pay are very high - \$25 - \$35 a week. For that money they should do better.

Also, we need a park up here, an outlet for the children. Weequahic Park is a long way off and the children have no place to play.

(Mrs.) Mary Robinson, Chairman
Peshine Avenue Branch, CHNC

3. One of the main questions I would like the council to work on this year is that of activity in the block branches. I would like to see a way of keeping branches active and together on other than a problem or crisis basis. Perhaps with executive assistance we can develop special programs for each block.

(Mrs.) Lee Bailey, Secretary
Farley Avenue Branch, CHNC

4. Newark like all cities is facing the problem of obsolescence. Years of neglect are taking their toll. If we are to retain the middle income group so essential to the economic and intellectual health of our city, there must be planned rebuilding of large areas. I believe we in the CHNC should support plans for middle income apartments with ample provisions for greenery and recreation areas.

I hope that these will include garden apartments, preferably of the duplex type. We must try to add some of the pleasant aspects of suburban living to the advantages of the city. If this or a similar program is possible, Newark can survive as a good place in which to live.

Dr. Alfred E. Finn, Corres. Sec'y.
CHNC

5. This is a proposal for an anti-discrimination ordinance for the City of Newark:

A fundamental cause of overcrowding in rooming houses at exorbitant rentals to Negroes and other minority peoples is the existence of blatant discrimination against these people in private multiple dwellings.

Overcrowding in Clinton Hill has imperiled:

- 1) The quality of the public schools. The building of Clinton Place Junior High was designed to relieve pressure on elementary schools. Overcrowded conditions have begun to cause a regression to larger classes in spite of the junior high.
- 2) Urban redevelopment. Granting urban renewal to our area has been the result of the relatively high residential character of Clinton Hill. The influx of rooming houses with transient population has corroded some residential streets (Peshine, Seymour). The future of Seymour Avenue, in the heart of the project area, will be important in determining the future of the project.
- 3) Zoning laws. A general violation of zoning laws, especially in Class II and Class I blocks exists.
- 4) Living standards. Many economic hardships are worked upon residents who are moved to high rental areas because of evictions from sales of homes to rooming house operators.
- 5) Health and Sanitation. Evidence is piling up of deterioration of garbage collection with large residues being left in the streets. This is especially true in rooming house areas, because of the tremendous number of people per house.

Thus, in connection with preservation of the integrated character of Clinton Hill, and preventing it from becoming a peripheral segregated area, other sections of the city must be opened to Negroes being displaced by the Central Ward Redevelopment Project.

Negroes must be able to rent decent apartments at reasonable rates anywhere in the city. One way of implementing an ordinance prohibiting discrimination in private housing would be to set up a board to hear complaints, to mediate, and to arbitrate.

Stanley Aronovitz, Vice-Chairman
Peshine Avenue Branch, CHNC

6. One of the most important activities of the council in 1957 was the Halloween Parade. The activities involved in organizing the parade as well as the parade itself might deserve to be called the most important council activity of 1957.

In the first place, a large number of people were brought together through a happy, pleasant experience, one that was free from the strain of work and that called for no expressions of opinion. Opportunity was offered to business people to participate in a community activity in a way that was easy to execute - donations. Perhaps more publicity should have been given to this fact, since most of the unpleasantness of past years seemed pointed toward the storekeepers.

A comparison of the appearance and incidents of 1957 around Halloween with those of previous years provides unquestionable proof that organized youth activities are a very basic need in Clinton Hill.

(Miss) Olga M. Russell
Vice-President, CHNC

TREASURER'S REPORT

Income and Deposits
 (memberships, donations, special
 funds /parade, bus trip/)

March 31, 1957	\$327.00
June 30, 1957	120.00
September 30, 1957	116.00
December 31, 1957	300.00

Expenses and Withdrawals
 (Stamps, stationery, special
 events, school rentals)

March 31, 1957	\$212.81
June 30, 1957	282.21
September 30, 1957	112.10
December 31, 1957	231.19

Total income 1957	\$863.00
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Total expenses	\$838.31
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Recapitulation

\$93.65	Balance on December 31, 1956
24.69	Difference or gain
<u>\$118.34</u>	New balance November 25, 1957 as of December 31, 1957
863.00	Income for 1957
838.31	Expenses for 1957
<u>24.69</u>	Gain for year

Halloween ParadeIncome (contributions)

\$166.00

Expenses

Gifts, prizes, candies, tricks and treats	\$137.89
School rental	25.20
Paper supplies, toys . . .	21.60
Insurance	15.00
Printing	5.75

Total Income	<u>166.00</u>
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Total Expenses	205.44
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Loss on parade: \$39.44

(A detailed breakdown of deposits and expenditures is available.)

Dr. Abraham A. Kurzrock
 Treasurer, C.H.N.C.